

CITY PLANNING MEANS APPLYING COMMON SENSE TO ALL QUESTIONS RELATING TO CIVIC GROWTH

That One Big Thought Brought Back From Niagara Falls.

BY FAIRMONT DELEGATES

O. G. Wilson and John Burchinal Report to the Rotary Club.

At today's meeting of the Rotary club City Superintendent of Schools O. G. Wilson and John Burchinal, the talented young architect, who represented the club at the annual City Planning conference held at Niagara Falls, for the purpose of finding out how city planning ideas apply to Fairmont conditions made very interesting reports, which are herewith printed in full:

By OTIS G. WILSON. Some months ago two big factories were located in a small Canadian town. It meant that large numbers of workmen and their families would move to the community. It meant also a big boom for that town. Accordingly, certain real estate men seeing their opportunity became interested in the development. They acquired land or options on land all around one side of the city and began to subdivide the properties into lots, to lay off narrow streets, to plan for lot sales, etc.

The town council sought the advice of a well-known city planner who upon request prepared a skeleton plan entirely independent of and very different from the quickly made plans of the real estate men. The city planner's plan provided for main arterial highways, one being 100 feet wide intersecting the property and designed to be a boulevard connecting up the different radial thoroughfares of the city. Open spaces were provided so that the people might have recreation facilities near their homes. Sites were reserved for two ward schools adjacent to small parks. A beautiful ravine was reserved as property of the city council for the purpose of providing recreation facilities and as a good position for a sewer main.

The city planner submitted his scheme to the council. It was discussed from all points of view. The real estate men were called into conference, the plan discussed with them. The council looked at it from the point of view of the real estate men; the real estate men looked at it from the standpoint of the city planner and the council. As a result the city authorities and the real estate men came to a perfect agreement. Everything that was suggested for the public's benefit was accepted by the real estate men.

The gains to the city may be summed up as follows:

- (1) A boulevard 100 feet wide running along the top of a ravine just where they wanted it.
- (2) The ravine was donated to the city.
- (3) Reservation for two school sites were secured.
- (4) Recreation centers were also secured.
- (5) Both banks of a creek running through one of the properties were protected.
- (6) If the town council had waited a few months this definite city plan could not have become a reality. Furthermore, it saved the community thousands of dollars by acquiring possession of open spaces for schools, recreation centers, parks, etc. Foresight saved the day in this particular instance. And it was all so simple and easy of accomplishment.

Walpole, Massachusetts, (5,500 Population).

As a result of a carefully made town planning scheme, Walpole, Mass., in two years (1914-16) accomplished very definite results. In adopting the city plan a Town Planning committee was created which committee acted upon all phases of proposed physical improvements. The opening and extension of streets, the laying of sewers, the construction of important buildings and other projects must be approved by the Planning committee. At the end of two years the achievements were:

- (1) Three important streets surveyed and laid out.
- (2) Thirty-five acres of land adjoining property of city hall acquired by purchase and by gift, the same to be used as a city park.
- (3) A park of eighteen acres added to the grounds of the Walpole High school.
- (4) Two new school-houses located and built.
- (5) The grounds around the Phipps ward school improved and beautified.
- (6) Two public playgrounds improved and enlarged by one-half acre each.
- (7) Baseball grounds laid out on four of the city public playgrounds.
- (8) One hundred and seventy-five acres of land adjoining the high school grounds obtained by gift, the same to be developed as a town forest.
- (9) One very bad curve in a city street removed.
- (10) The placing of drinking fountains in recreation centers and on playgrounds.
- (11) Plans were made for the proposed new streets and the widening of certain old streets. A program of development covering a period of five years adopted.
- (12) Main street of the city to be widened to eighty feet. Plans approved.

The planning problems of small cities are much the same as those of larger cities. There is this difference, however, the planning problems of larger cities must be in part at least corrective; of smaller cities the plans may be mainly preventive. In a certain English city at present \$1,000,000 per

Observation of a Rotarian at City Planning Conference

At the weekly luncheon of the Rotary club today, when the report of the club's delegates to the annual City Planning conference was made, the following mimeographed remarks, written by Prof. O. G. Wilson, who was one of the two delegates, was placed at the plate of each club member. They constitute a few of the more striking of the observations made by Prof. Wilson at the conference:

The Conference was attended by representatives from nineteen states from four provinces of Canada, from Japan and New Zealand. West Virginia had two representatives both from Fairmont.

California had one representative, Utah one, Washington two, Texas three, Iowa four, Massachusetts eight, Ohio eighteen, Pennsylvania, nineteen, New York forty-eight, and Canada forty-nine.

The registration aggregated about two hundred persons most of whom represented chambers of commerce, Rotary clubs, municipal governments. There were city planners, city engineers, architects, real estate agents in attendance.

Niagara Falls was chosen as the meeting place for the reason that it affords an excellent laboratory in city planning. Several towns on the Canadian side and Niagara Falls on the American side have adopted definite constructive plans for the growth of these cities.

The Fairmont delegates wished many times that all the members of the Fairmont Rotary club might have had the privilege of attending the sessions and to have heard the many fine discussions of experts, not one of whom but had a message interesting and instructive.

Where city charters do not have ample powers to execute city planning policies the state legislature must be invoked. Such legislation has already been sought and secured in a number of states, particularly in New York, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, California, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Snap Shot Ideas. Industrial cities have insatiable appetites for population. Too often cities are concerned in getting many industries instead of getting only those which economically belong there.

Cities build streets with no objective end, counties build highways that lead nowhere.

The approach to a city should not be inhospitable. The highways should be improved and of good grade.

The greatest result in city planning

is to widen a street in the center of the city. Many similar examples could perhaps be found of costly mistakes.

In small cities high standards can be adopted. In larger cities lower standards must maintain. In small cities improvements come at low cost; in larger cities the cost is often prohibitive.

City Planning Applied to Fairmont's Schools. It was pointed out repeatedly that the physical growth of a city must not outgrow or over-reach the growth and development of the city's educational facilities. The two movements should go hand in hand. They cannot be divorced. A modern industrial city with inadequate school facilities is destined to early arrested development. Every growing city finds it exceedingly difficult to keep its school plant space with growth in school population. But if physical growth is to be substantial and permanent, it must be accompanied by a corresponding expansion of school policies and building programs.

Fairmont is the name not only of a city but of a region, teeming with industry. Mining, manufacturing, farming, transportation engage the brain and brawn of our people.

Our problem is quite as much regional as city. Any plan for the physical development of our city or our schools should take into consideration the larger unit, the region.

Within a radius of five miles there are approximately one thousand boys and girls enrolled in high schools. Perhaps four hundred other boys and girls in this area would be in high school if they had opportunities to learn a vocation.

In the area mentioned we have five different high schools each one endeavoring as best it can with its limited advantages to serve the community in which it is located. But not one of the five high schools, our own included, offers courses in any kind of shop work except in manual training. Not one offers courses in metal, printing, automobile repair, carpentry, mining, electricity or in industrial chemistry. And not one provides systematic physical education. If not, why not? This region abounds in wealth, and the citizens generously support free public schools.

The home-rule bogie is pretty firmly established in American communities, examples of which are to be found in the Fairmont region. As a result these small high schools within a stones throw of Fairmont have sprung into existence, and instead of having one or two big efficient institutions we cherish the home rule policy and support at least five high schools—good ones as far as they go—but in the present day needs. One immediate need of this region is a modern high school destined and equipped to provide the training, liberal and vocational, for the young men and women whose future competency is to be gained here.

The small high schools already established should become standard junior high schools with special emphasis upon pre-vocational training. When pupils have finished the junior high schools they should have the advantages of the senior high school with its varied courses of study, liberal and vocational. In this senior high school which would be located in Fairmont the training would be extended and intensified.

has been accomplished where nature has placed obstacles in the way. The presence of rivers, hills, swamps, is but an invitation to the city to plan and beautify.

In California cities have the courage to say "no house in this zone shall occupy more than 30 per cent of the lot." And again, "In this zone no residence shall house more than one family."

If your idea of city or regional planning is weak and vague it will have a brief sickly existence.

In Europe they don't allow the independent exposure of buildings. The four sides must be finished.

Any community receiving special benefits as a result of general community enterprise should pay special assessments in proportion to the benefits derived.

If city and regional planning is to get results we must continually increase our stock of information and enthusiasm and stimulate our imagination.

Mutilation of hills or other surfaces are costly mistakes which in time must be paid for.

Health and happiness of the civic population increase with proper city planning. Charts were shown showing that in Liverpool, England children in a nearby so-called garden town were taller and weighed far more than children of a corresponding age and social scale in an industrial section of Liverpool itself.

Workers in industries should live in comfortable houses within easy reach of public schools, recreation centers, churches and other social institutions.

The problem of labor turnover will be solved when workers own their own homes or live in good houses that rent for moderate prices. It never will be solved until then.

Forty-three cities of the United States in 1916 inaugurated comprehensive planning schemes. More than 250 other cities have been working out planning policies. Dayton, Akron, Flint, Mich., Niagara Falls and Tonawanda have achieved constructive results in city and regional planning.

Our excellent system of interurban car lines and improved roads each radiating from the city in all directions would make it possible for the pupils of Riverview, Baxter, Barrackville, Monongah and East Side to be assembled in Fairmont within twenty minutes time. In many sections of this country, it is true even in West Virginia, schools are consolidated and pupils are transported daily to school in wagons, or trucks at public expense.

Consolidation of high school of this immediate vicinity appeals to me not only as a possibility, but as an expediency.

We have already established our agencies for transportation. The street cars can carry the youth cheaper and quicker than can school wagons or trucks carry pupils in other communities. We need only the initiative and the vision. At the opportune time these virtues will be supplied in abundance.

Some such plan as the one just outlined in skeleton form should become a matter of serious consideration by business men as well as by boards of education. When the new high school is built it should belong not only to Fairmont but to the Fairmont region, particularly to the immediate region which would become the chief beneficiaries of such a plan.

In building and maintaining a new high school the city should not carry the load alone. As a matter of fact at the present time we could not do so. Our borrowing power is but \$150,000.00. It will take a half million to build and equip in proper fashion. Either the limits of independent district should be extended so as to include more wealth or some plan should be devised whereby the outlying districts could share in the expense.

We had last year one hundred and forty pupils in the Fairmont High school who were non-resident. They came from Winfield, Union, Union Independent, Fairmont and Grant districts. Why not permit these communities to feel an ownership in the Fairmont High school, particularly after it evolves into an institution in keeping with the growth and prosperity of the Fairmont region?

Business men in cooperation with our Boards of Education should make this phase of city-planning of immediate consideration.

By JOHN BURCHINAL. The eleventh annual National Conference on City Planning was convened in Niagara Falls on May 26th, and was adjourned in Buffalo May 28th. There were three sessions of the Conference on each of the two days that our delegates were present, and at each session some particular phase of City Planning was fully discussed in papers by eminent American and Canadian authorities.

We have felt that this Club was interested less in the technical discussion of the industrial, architectural, engineering or social welfare problems involved in the execution of a city plan, than in the definition of city planning, the benefits to be derived from a city plan, the practical procedure in the legal establishment of a City Planning Commission, and the methods of financing City Planning. And so, we have acquired certain information on these points which we hope to be able to transmit intelligently to you.

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"City or Town Planning," to quote Mr. Thomas Adams, Past President of the Town Planning Institute of Great Britain, "has to do with exercise of foresight, common sense and business judgment in regard to all questions relating to civic growth and civic welfare. The first question to be considered in the planning of a city or a town, is the question of its industry using the term in a broad sense as representing all of its productive, industrial, commercial undertakings. Industry is the condition of the city's being. Health, convenience, and beauty are the conditions of its well being. The being of a city depends upon the units of its industrial organization which provide the necessities of life—food, clothing and shelter to the community—to society in all its grades and forms. A city can exist only so long as it has the means of securing these necessities, even if it has not health, convenience and beauty."

The first few lines of this definition contain the whole idea of City Planning, common sense and business judgment in regard to all questions relative to civic growth and civic welfare." Or in other words, the application, by the community, of the same principles in the direction of the growth and development of the community that are ordinarily employed in the direction of the growth and development of private business enterprise.

A City Plan provides for the zoning of the city into districts of industry, commerce and homes, with due regard for health, convenience and beauty in the various departments of a modern department store are studied for convenience of the shopper, and the ultimate increased profit to the merchant.

This is not a new idea. It has been employed, more or less crudely, in every city and town in the country. But there is not a city or town in the country without a City Plan, that does not have some industries where they should never have been located, or where commerce is not slowly invading the best residential districts. City Planning therefore has to do with slow, moderate correction of the present existing evils resulting from unrestricted civic growth, and with absolute prohibition in the future for similar evils.

The obvious advantage of City Planning may be briefly classified as follows: Industrial, by the provision for the growth and development of industry in certain districts, least objectionable from an aesthetic point of view, and where such growth and development may progress unhindered by arbitrary restrictions imposed by the holders of properties unused, or unsuited to industrial purposes. To this zone would converge all the transportation lines of the community, and where water transportation is available, direct communication would be had with municipal or privately owned piers.

Similarly, zones for the transaction of commercial and general business activities would be established and protected, with the assurance of the exclusion of interests tending to render these zones undesirable for these activities, or the reduction of the property values therein.

The residential zones would be subdivided into district for the finer homes, with its streets not available for trolley or general commercial traffic; other districts would be apportioned for single family homes of less pretentious character; and others where apartments or multi-family homes may be erected along with single family homes. And so, on down to the cheaper homes for industrial labor. Each district receiving the same study regarding the number of families per acre, proportion of each lot available for building purposes, street widths, etc.

No city plan, worthy of the name, could be conceived without provision for the adequate disposal of sewage

and an effective sanitary method of sewage disposal. On such a foundation, buttressed by supervision over building construction in regard to the plumbing, drainage and other sanitary regulations, is reared a healthy city.

A city scientifically planned is, reasonably, a convenient city. The buildings for the transaction of public affairs are grouped for the convenience of those who use them. The location of the schools, churches, hospitals, charitable institutions, etc. are studied, not only from the point of convenience, but also with regard to their effect on the property values in the districts in which they may be located. All parts of such a city are connected by arterial highways varying in size and construction with the purposes they serve. The boulevards, the park ways and drives seek out the public buildings, parks, spots of natural beauty and the points of historical interest.

The orderliness of the city resulting from the zoning, the grouping of the public buildings, the general excellence of design of all buildings induced by municipal supervision, the parks, the beauty of the city, all these are the result of the attainment of beauty all money spent for civic improvement is wasted.

These and other advantages in civic growth have their source in the City Plan, and the American cities that are in the way of realizing these advantages have proceeded somewhat as follows: The need of a City Plan has been recognized and the idea sponsored by some civic organization such as our own. A City Planning Committee has been appointed within that body, that has addressed itself to a campaign of educational propaganda for the instruction of the community in the need of a City Plan for the rational direction of the city's growth and development, in order that the greatest benefits may be secured with the least cost, and to prevent the great economic waste in the careless haphazard growth, usually suffered in our cities and towns.

It would be pertinent to add in this connection, where this work has been neglected, or has not been done well, enormous insurmountable difficulties are encountered in the attempt to establish a City Planning Commission. For example, the Chamber of Commerce of Akron, Ohio, (with what preliminary work I am not prepared to state) engaged Mr. John Nelson to prepare a City Plan for Akron, over a year ago and the plan still remains a diagram hanging on the wall in the Chamber of Commerce. This plan scarcely had been delivered when entirely erroneous ideas as to the character and purpose of the plan, had spread until, to quote the President of that Chamber, "Down right hostility to the plan has been developed."

Assuming the formation of a favorable public opinion, the organization fostering the movement, extends its efforts toward the enactment of the state and local legislation necessary for the legal establishment of a City Planning Commission, with certain definite powers regarding the manner and direction of the city's growth, supervision of building construction, purchase of lands, etc.

Between the theory of the City Planning and City Planning in execution, there lies a wide gulf of civic misunderstanding, distrust, avarice, and penny wise economy which must be negotiated in the slowly moving tank of political administration. For no progress can be made by an organization without an alignment with the forces of municipal administration. And yet, when left solely in charge of such agencies, the complete failure of the City Planning project is usually swift and sure.

The state or local legislation commonly confers upon the mayor the power of the appointment of the City Planning Commission, and, while not necessary, it is well for the success of project that committee having done the preparatory work have a large representation thereon. Three important members of the Commission are the Mayor, the City Engineer, and the City Solicitor. Without their understanding and sympathy, the end will be difficult of attainment for when all other arrangements have failed, the city solicitor's statement "It is not legal" has been the requiem over many well laid plans for civic improvement.

Following the legal establishment of the City Planning Commission, an industrial survey of the city is usually made for the purpose of determining the number and kinds of industries already present. And to determine what industries if any, not locally represented, may be profitably maintained, by reason of the geographical location, sources of raw materials, transportation facilities, fuel, and the markets for the finished products. For the same reasons, to learn what industries, if any, already present cannot be profitably maintained, with the view to the discouragement if not the actual prohibition in the future, of similar locations.

Accurate geographical and topographical maps are also prepared and supplemented by all possible data regarding natural resources, industry, commerce, agriculture, transportation, population, education, etc. From these maps are also prepared use maps that show the number and kind of buildings used for every purpose in the city. These maps form the basis of the estimates prepared for increase of industries, population, etc.

At this time, if not before, the services of the best City Planner that can be had, should be engaged for the preparation of the City Plan, in conjunction with the local City Planning Commission. Then, when this plan is completed, accepted and approved, it should be executed with fidelity and determination in the correction of the present mistakes and the direction of the future growth, to the very limit of the city's financial resources, bearing in mind that works of correction can be accomplished with far less expense now than at any future time.

The question of financing a City Plan is of the utmost importance and no community should embark on a City Planning without due regard for the expenses it shall entail. This matter of cost, however, should not operate as a deterrent to the best possible City Planning, but after the acceptance and approval of the best possible City Plan, only the most necessary corrections and improvements should be made from time to time, within the financial limits of the community.

Different communities have employed different methods for the payment of the costs of City Planning; but it is believed, at this time, that the most equitable method is that of local assessments. Mr. Nelson P. Lewis, chief engineer of the Board of Estimates and Appropriations of the City of New York, has briefly enumerated the cardinal principles of this method as follows:

1. When there is local benefit there should always be local assessment.
2. The entire city or metropolis district should bear no part of the expenses unless the improvement is in some degree of metropolitan importance and benefit.
3. Assessments should not be confined to the cost of acquiring and improving streets, but should extend to any improvement which will increase the value of the neighboring property, and should be apportioned as nearly as possible to the probable benefit.
4. A workable policy and its application to each case should be entrusted to the board of men specially qualified, whose term of office should so overlap as to insure continuity of policy and purpose.

With this we have endeavored to recall to you the salient features of City Planning, with its obvious importance and benefits. And whether or not this club is moved to the adoption of the idea of City Planning for Fairmont, there are certain problems existing in Fairmont that clamor for

Intelligent concerted action on the part of the community, for study of the methods of correction and the adequate provision for the future.

The housing situation in Fairmont is serious, not alone from the fact of the present costs of building materials, but also from the fact that we have not kept pace in the anticipation of our industrial development and the necessary industrial housing. There should always be in every industrial community, sufficient areas of municipally improved tracts for the immediate and economical construction of working men's homes. Portland, Oregon, among others, presents a striking example of the lack of foresight in the field of industrial housing. There, when they were faced with necessity of immediate erection of hundreds of homes for the accommodation of the ship yard workers, it was found that the only available sites for such homes had been developed on the properties rendered it impossible to build cheap houses in the area or sold for a profit. This area had been purchased by speculative operators, and under their direction, improved by the city, with the result that the lots were all larger than necessary for the homes it was required to build, and that the street widths were entirely out of proportion to those required in such districts.

The present gateway to the East side is a "horrible example" of what should never occur in the growth of a well ordered city. And Jackson street has not received the study it deserves in the consideration of the expansion of our commercial district. Our hills, now being developed at will, offer a fertile field to the genius of the landscape architect. But even sane municipal engineering could transform them into beautiful residential districts, easy of access from the central part of the city. The present scars on these hills might well be screened by the planting of trees, until permanent treatment could be afforded.

The locations of our future public buildings, such as the court house, city hall, (or even their combination into a city county building), the Public library, auditorium, schools, etc., and the disposition of Loop park, and the Coal Run ravine, are all matters of conjecture. As is also, the city's ability, in the future, to purchase, economically, sufficient lands for other parks, and the necessary open spaces about our public buildings. Within two years our splendid new bridge across the river will have been completed, and upon its completion, we have the promise of two new railroad passenger stations. Are these stations to be located where they will best serve our interests, or where the railroad may build them with the least expense and inconvenience to themselves? And will they be of such character as to harmonize with this bridge, or will they be just passenger stations, built from the plans of the assistant to the chief engineers of the railroads and which have served for other communities of like population?

These problems are of importance to the people of Fairmont, if we are to grow in a rational manner and their solutions lie only in the preparation and execution of a comprehensive city plan. If this Rotary club is moved to the adoption of the idea of City Planning for Fairmont, recommendation is made for the appointment of a committee, within this body, with representation from the press, other civic and welfare organizations, industry, commerce, public utilities, agriculture, and the professions of architecture, education, engineering, law and medicine. This committee shall be known as the City Planning committee, and shall be charged with the work preparatory to the legal establishment of a City Planning commission, to the end of the creation of a city industrially developed to the very limit of its natural resources, renowned for its health, marked for its convenience and cherished for its beauty.